

U.S. Congressman Mike Pence delivered the following remarks on the House floor today in opposition to legislation that would repeal the military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy:

**"Let me begin by stating the obvious, if I can. We are a nation at war. We have soldiers who are in harm's way at this hour forward deployed at Bagram and Helmand Province, places I visited just a few short weeks ago. And so this 'business' is not taking place in a vacuum.**

**"We are a nation at war, and let me say to the distinguished gentleman from Massachusetts who just spoke who suggested that those of us who oppose a repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell would commit some libel against Americans with whom we differ on lifestyle choices: Nothing could be further from the truth.**

**"As a conservative, I have a particular worldview about moral issues. They do not bear upon this question. This is an issue exclusively that is about recruitment, readiness, unit cohesion and retention because we are a nation at war.**

**"Now, I'm not a soldier but I'm the son of a combat soldier. I think we should listen to our soldiers as we continue this debate. And the recent key findings in the Pentagon study, overall U.S. military predicted negative or very negative effects: 30 percent. Percentage of the Marine Corps predicted negative effects: 43 percent. Forty-eight percent within the Army. Fifty-eight percent within Marine combat units.**

**"We know the leadership that's testified before the Congress. Air Force Chief of Staff, General Norton Schwartz said, 'I do not think it prudent to seek full implementation, too risky.'**

**"Of course, the most ominous of all was the suggestion by the Army Chief of Staff,**

**General George Casey, who said, that it could 'increase the risk on our soldiers.'**

**"Men and women, no one in this house would desire to increase the risk on our soldiers at a time of war. I know that.**

**"And so I rise today simply to say, let's remember the time in which we live. Let's remember the first obligation of the national government is to provide for the common defense, and I believe the first obligation in providing for the common defense is to provide the circumstances and the resources for those who wear the uniform and carry the weapon and provide the shield under which we live and our freedom survives.**

**"We're a nation at war. Reject this measure. Don't Ask, Don't Tell was a successful compromise in 1993, and so that compromise should remain. I yield back."**